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This Pen for Hire, by John Leonard (Doubleday, $7.95). "When you write on assignment," says the editor of The New York Times Book Review, "books happen to you like accidents." Here, culled from half a million words written in four years, are some of Leonard's accident reports: more than 100 essays, mostly very brief (in his first essay, Leonard discusses the reviewer's "800-word mind"), chiefly on books of the last few years but also on politics and television and, of course, the myriad human concerns that are reflected in these three media of entertainment and enlightenment.